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WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

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Each day it is becoming more and more evident that we are interdependent and that the world is rapidly shrinking.

No longer is it realistic to talk of isolated developments in a country or in a region of the world. We are constantly influenced by and influence others. We all depend on a world economy and of other factors - for jobs, for food, for energy, for raw materials. We are gradually coming to realize that we are just as much dependent on a sound environment and on sensible resource management - globally as well as nationally and regionally. Economy, environment and development are inseparably linked.

All this is increasingly recognized in theory. In theory we realize that the time has come to think and to act in global and long-term terms and build upon our clear interdependence as the basis for common efforts and joint responsibility. In practice, however, our decisions and actions are still based upon traditional, short-term thinking on a national scale. The result can be seen all around. Enormous problems now threaten the people and the ecosystems of this world. So far we have largely been incapable of dealing with the problems of increasing poverty, depletion of resources and environmental degradation. These problems call for global cooperation and commitment of dimensions the world has not seen before.

If there is to be a common future on our planet a new, long-term course for action must be chartered. New ideas, new approaches, indeed a new determination must be brought forth.

The World Commission on Environment and Development has been established to accept the challenge of addressing the crucial issues and of proposing short-, medium- and long-term environmental and development strategies for the world community.

The Members of the Commission all serve in their own capacity. Thus, the Commission as a body is free to address any issues, to formulate and present any views and recommendations, and to present any proposals it considers relevant and pertinent.

The World Commission on Environment and Development recognizes the complexity of the present state and future difficulties of the world situation. Therefore the Commission will work very openly and involve a considerable number of aspects in its work. In order to secure a profitable flow of facts, data, ideas and experiences to and from the Commission many contacts will be taken and an open dialogue will be maintained. The Commission will have that kind of a dialogue with Governments, with intergovernmental organizations, with other international organizations, with experts in relevant fields, with the scientific community, with non-governmental organizations and with the media with its links to the general public.

These contacts with many decision makers, organizations and public opinion will be of vital importance for the success of the Commission in its work. The Commission will address issues that concern each and everyone of us and to that end it should be an ambitious goal for the Commission to strive to enable anyone anywhere to follow and understand the work and the issues and how they influence their part of the world as well as the whole world community and its future.

The very work process of the Commission should serve as an encouragement while involving people and ideas worldwide. The World Commission on Environment and Development shall aim at working actively, among States and peoples

and individuals alike, to revitalize profound concern and consciousness of the urgency of the serious problems and threats facing us all.

An important task of the Commission is thus to raise public awareness and stimulate an informed public debate on the issues addressed by the Commission. Unless people know and care there will not be a sufficient base for change and willingness to share the burdens. However, parallel to this it is equally important to raise the level of commitment from Governments to decide on effective action. It will be an extremely important task of the Commission to convince decision makers throughout the world of the need for common political aspirations, common political will and open-minded political solutions based on a common understanding, a common awareness and an increased sense of joint responsibility for the world community, today as well as in the future.

Having recognized this, the World Commission on Environment and Development will address its overall task to chart this new course that is urgently needed if the world is to solve its basic problems. Only then can there be a sustainable development and a common future. The Commission will make it its task to present concrete, realistic, well-founded proposals and recommendations on how to deal with these problems in a short-, medium- and long-term perspective.

In doing this the Commission will review - closely and carefully - the already existing studies, reports, plans of action etc of relevance, including such material from the UN system and from previous world commissions (on the North-South issue and on security issues and disarmament).

The material already available will be used to the extent that is considered adequate and will be complemented when necessary and desirable. The Commission will comment on current efforts, goals and obstacles and

present its conclusions thereupon.

In charting a new, long-term course for action for the world community, the proposals and recommendations of the Commission shall be based upon the clear recognition and understand of the interrelationships between a number of crucial issues:

People

Resources and resource management (the resource basis)

Sustainable development (balance between economic growth and use of renewable and non-renewable resources)

Redistribution (economic and social justice within and between nations and regions; extreme poverty versus concentrated affluence)

National security (self sufficiency, competition for resources, mutual dependence)

Disarmament and the effects of war.

In formulating its own Terms of Reference for its work the World Commission on Environment and Development has paid careful attention to the resolution 38/161 of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In the resolution the General Assembly, among other things, suggests that the Commission should focus mainly on the following Terms of Reference:

- To propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond
- To recommend ways in which concern for the environment may be translated into greater cooperation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives which take account of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development
- To consider ways and means by which the international

community can deal more effectively with environmental concerns in the light of the other recommendations in its report

- To help to define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and of the appropriate efforts needed to deal successfully with the problems of protecting and enhancing the environment, a long-term agenda for action during the coming decades, and aspirational goals for the world community, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the session of a special character of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme in 1982.